

Estes Park Museum Local History Archive

Finding Aid

Title of Collection: Abner and Alberta Sprague Collection

Box ID: ASC

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

Creator: Alberta Sprague, Abner Sprague.

Title: Abner and Alberta Sprague Collection

Date Range: 1890-1950

Brief description of collection: This collection consists of 56 dairies primarily written by Alberta Sprague, as well as five written by Abner Sprague. The collection also includes drafts of "My Pioneer Life," written by Abner Sprague and clothing related to the Sprague family. The collection was donated to the Estes Park Museum in March, 2016.

Quantity: 1.5 linear foot

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Abner Sprague first came to the Estes Park area in 1868 with two school mates. Eight years later, Sprague returned to Moraine Park, then known as Willow Park and filed for a Homestead Claim. With his wife Alberta, the Sprague family initially tried to make a living ranching, however they quickly began feeding and lodging tourists. In turn, this led the Spragues to build several cabins and a hotel with overnight accommodations. Abner Sprague remarked that "We came here for small ranch operations, but guests and visitors became so numerous at first wanting eggs, milk and other provisions then wanting lodging, and finally demanding full accommodations, that we had to go into the hotel business or go bankrupt from keeping free company!"

In 1904, the Spragues sold their hotel to J.D. Stead and moved to Loveland, Colorado, however by 1908 they had returned to the area. They purchased property in Glacier Basin (part of present day Rocky Mountain National Park) and built a summer home. By 1914 the couple had completed a lodge located at the present-day site of Sprague Lake and parking lot. They operated Sprague's Lodge until the National Park Service purchased their property in 1932. Sprague's Lodge continued in operation until their 20-year lease with the Park ran out. The property was razed in 1957.

Not only were the Spragues active in the tourist and lodging industries but they were active members of the Estes Park community. Their daily lives were significant to the development of both Rocky Mountain National Park and the Town of Estes Park. In addition to being a resort owner, Abner Sprague was an explorer, civil engineer, mountaineer, author and an active member of the Rotary Club of Estes Park. Abner Sprague helped survey the Town of Estes Park in 1905 and helped survey Larimer County three times over the course of his life. Alberta Sprague was involved in P.E.O. a service club and Abner Sprague was an active member in Rotary.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION

This collection consists primarily of diaries written by Mary Alberta Sprague throughout her life. The collection also includes a few of Abner Sprague's diaries, as well as drafts of his memoir, "My Pioneer Life," originally published in 1999 by the Rocky Mountain Nature Association. The collection also includes a few miscellaneous books, photograph albums, and physical artifacts related to the Sprague families. The total collection spans the Sprague's life in the area from the 1890s to 1949.

Researchers interested in the early history and development of both Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park should find this collection useful. Additional researchers interested in Western women's history will find this collection rich in information since it spans such a long period of time.

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Together the materials in this collection span over 50 years and document the life and development of one the area's pioneer families.

Overall the collection is in good to fair condition. Many of the diaries are in stable condition, however several books have bent, creased or torn pages in addition to broken spines. In addition to this, many of the earlier diaries are written on paper calendars and are quite fragile. Researchers should handle the collection with care and should always wear gloves.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COLLECTION

This collection is arranged in four series. Series one consists all the diaries written by Alberta Sprague and is contained within folders one through twenty-six. These books are further arranged chronologically. Series two is contained within folder 26 and consists of miscellaneous books owned or written in by the Sprague family. Series three consists of diaries written by Aber Sprague, as well as drafts of his memoir "My Pioneer Life." Series four consists of physical artifacts.

RELATED MATERIALS

There may be associated materials located at Rocky Mountain National Park's repository.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Preferred Citation: Courtesy of Estes Park Museum, Abner and Alberta Sprague Collection

Accession Information 2016.004.001-.063

Processing Information: Processed by Naomi Gerakios Mucci on February 11, 2017.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

Note to Researchers: To request materials, please note the box numbers shown below.

Box	Folder	Contents and Description	Date Range
ASC 01	1	Small green pocket diary. "Visits Made During the Year 1892" 2016.004.001-.006	1892 -1903
ASC 01	2	Fireman's Fund Insurance Calendar, written in daily by Alberta Sprague, 2016.004.007	1906
ASC 01	3	Fireman's Fund Insurance Calendar, written in in daily by Alberta Sprague, 2016.004.008	1907
ASC 01	4	Fireman's Fund Insurance Calendar, written in daily by Alberta Sprague, 2016.004.009	1909
ASC 01	5	Fireman's Fund Insurance Calendar, written in daily by Alberta Sprague, 2016.004.010	1910
ASC 01	6	Fireman's Fund Insurance Calendar, written in daily by Alberta Sprague, 2016.004.011	1911
ASC 01	7	Fireman's Fund Insurance Calendar, written in daily by Alberta Sprague, 2016.004.012	1912
ASC 01	8	Fireman's Fund Insurance Calendar, written in daily by Alberta Sprague, 2016.004.013	1913
ASC 01	9	Fireman's Fund Insurance Calendar, written in daily by Alberta Sprague, 2016.004.014	1914

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ASC 01	10	Fireman's Fund Insurance Calendar, written in daily by Alberta Sprague, 2016.004.015	1915
ASC 01	11	Fireman's Fund Insurance Calendar, written in daily by Alberta Sprague, 2016.004.016	1916
ASC 01	12	Fireman's Fund Insurance Calendar, written in daily by Alberta Sprague, 2016.004.017	1917
ASC 01	13	Fireman's Fund Insurance Calendar, written in daily by Alberta Sprague, 2016.004.018	1918
ASC 01	14	Fireman's Fund Insurance Calendar, written in daily by Alberta Sprague 2016.004.019, 2016.004.020	1919
ASC 01	15	Fireman's Fund Insurance Calendar, written in daily by Alberta Sprague, 2016.004.021	1920
ASC 01	16	Fireman's Fund Insurance Calendar, written in daily by Alberta Sprague, 2016.004.022	1921
ASC 01	17	Fireman's Fund Insurance Calendar, written in daily by Alberta Sprague, 2016.004.023	1922
ASC 01	18	Green Standard Dairy, in which Alberta Sprague wrote daily notes. Folder contains two books, 2016.004.024 and 2016.004.025	1923-1924
ASC 01	19	Red "Daily Reminder" book for 1925 and red "Date Book for 1926," in which Alberta Sprague wrote short daily notes, contains two books 2016.004.026 and 2016.004.027	1925-1926
ASC 01	20	Red "Date Book for 1927," and "Date Book for 1928," in which Alberta Sprague wrote short daily notes, 2016.004.028 and 2016.004.029	1927-1928
ASC 01	21	Red "Date Book for 1930," and "Date Book for 1931," in which Alberta Sprague wrote short daily notes, 2016.004.030 and 2016.004.031	1929-1930
ASC 01	21	Red "Date Book for 1931," and "Date Book for 1932," written by Alberta Sprague; 2016.004.032 and 2016.004.033	1931-1932
ASC 01	22	Red "Date Book, 1933," narrow red "Diary 1934," and square brown book with golden stamped decoration. Alberta Sprague kept daily notes in all of these 2016.004.034, 2016.004.035, 2016.036	1933-1935
ASC 01	23	Blue "Priscilla Diary, 1936," Black "Diary, 1937," and Blue "Diary, 1939" 2016.004.037, 2016.004.038, 2016.004.039, 2016.004.040	1936-1940
ASC 01	24	Black "Diary," for 1940-1943 written in daily by Alberta Sprague, 2016.004.041 – 2016.0004.043	1941-1943
ASC 01	25	Black "Diary" for 1945, Red "Diary" for 1946, Green "Diary," for 1947, and blue "Dairy" for 1948. Alberta Sprague kept daily notes in all of these, Contains four books 2016.004.044 —2016.004.048	1945-1948
ASC 01	26	Black Diary for 1949 that Alberta Sprague wrote daily notes and miscellaneous materials. One black photograph album, one small	1949, undated

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		notebook, and one vest pocket "argument settler." Contains 2016.004.049-.052	
ASC 01	27	Abner Sprague Diaries, various years folder contains four books 2016.004.053-2016.004.056	1915-1916, 1929, 1937. 1940
ASC 02	1	Manuscript, "My Pioneer Life," book I 2016.004.057	Undated
ASC 02	2	Manuscript, "My Pioneer Life," Book II, 2016.004.058	Undated
ASC 02	3	Manuscript, "My Pioneer Life," Book II (copy 2) 2016.004.059	Undated
ASC 02	4	Manuscript, "My Pioneer Life," Book III 2016.004.060	Undated
ASC 02	5	Manuscript, "My Pioneer Life, Book IV, 2016.004.061	Undated